No previous backpacking or sea-kayaking experience is required to participate in Wilderness Orientation (WO). Outdoor skills to be covered include backcountry living, map reading, and Leave No Trace ethics.

Students on the backpacking program will have the opportunity to climb a major peak, experience a 24-hour solo, and travel off trail. Students on the sea kayaking program will have the opportunity to learn expedition paddling skills, navigation, rescues, experience a solo and do a service project. Your Wilderness Orientation adventure is a great way to make new friends and prepare for a positive transition into university life!

Wilderness Orientation (WO) is an invaluable opportunity for incoming college students. It serves as a head start to the college experience by providing students a chance to form new friendships and discuss their hopes and fears about entering college. Participation in this unique trip gives them the confidence they need to feel ready for college life.

- Learn basic backpacking or sea kayaking skills.
- Create lasting connections with fellow trip participants, or “WO-sters”
- Discuss college life and the unique aspects of a UCSC education.
- Learn about yourself through wilderness challenges.

“Not to be missed... One of the best experiences I have ever had.”

Jump-start your college experience, make friends, get inspired and explore nature.
The WOnderful Staff

Since Wilderness Orientation began in 1983, this popular program has grown to seven times its original size. The program is an integral part of the Outdoor Recreation Department at UCSC. The WO staff takes great pride in the program and strives to create meaningful experiences for all participants. Each hiking and kayaking group of 10-12 students is led by an instructor, an assistant instructor, and a student volunteer. All of the instructors are highly skilled in backpacking, rock climbing, expedition kayaking and group facilitation, and trained in wilderness medicine. They are dedicated, energetic, and inspiring people.

Co-Directors: Kevin Condon and Rozy Bathrick have a combined 14 years of experience facilitating WO magic and are dedicated to the growth and strength of the program. During their time at UCSC, Rozy and Kevin led backpacking, mountaineering, rock climbing, and even roller skating expeditions for the Recreation Department. Each graduated UCSC with a degree in Environmental Studies and a strong sense of connection to the wild lands of California. Rozy continues to feed her passion for the outdoors with work at the Ken Norris Center for Natural History at UCSC and by exploring meadows, forests and caves as a field biologist.

Kevin spends his time inspiring middle school students and their teachers to spend time outside during the school year through an outdoor education program that he founded in the Monterey Bay region. Both Kevin and Rozy can hardly wait for all of the staff to come together again for another year of incredible experiences with the WO-sters of 2018!

Sierra Nevada Backpacking
The Backpacking program will spend nine days traveling on foot through California’s majestic Sierra Nevada Mountains. There are four different routes, each in the “High Sierra” region south of Yosemite. Much of the time will be spent above timberline in the crisp alpine air between 6,000 and 11,000 feet.

Backpacking Session 1: Aug. 16 (1pm) - Aug. 26 (10am) - $700
Backpacking Session 2: Sept. 1 (1pm) - Sept. 11 (10am) - $700

Pt. Reyes Expedition Sea Kayaking and Service
The Sea Kayaking program will spend 8 days in one of California’s hidden gems, Tomales Bay within Pt. Reyes National Seashore. We will travel by kayak with all of our gear and food moving from beach to beach. The last day will be spent doing service work in the park.

Sea Kayaking / Service Session 1 : Aug. 16 (1pm) - Aug. 23 (10am) - $550
Sea Kayaking / Service Session 3: Sept. 1 (1pm) - Sept. 8 (10am) - $550

Equipment and Costs
The fee covers food, round-trip transportation from UCSC, instruction, and group equipment (tents, stoves, group cooking gear, climbing gear, maps and all kayaking gear). Students are expected to provide all personal equipment including boots, clothing, sleeping bag, backpack, and sleeping pad. A limited amount of equipment is available for rent through Wilderness Orientation. A complete equipment list is available online. Expect additional expenses for personal gear.

Get Signed Up
Register at recreation.ucsc.edu. Registration is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Upon receiving your payment, you will receive an email with a link to our website where you will need to fill out our paperwork and print out a gear list. If the trips fill (and they do fill fast), you may place your name on the waiting list online. Wilderness Orientation can be a physically and emotionally demanding experience. If you are under the care of a doctor concerning your physical or emotional health, please consult them before registering for this program. If you have questions, please call 831.459.2806 and ask about Wilderness Orientation.

Cancellations: Full refund with 40 days notice prior to the course starting date; 50% refund with 25-39 days notice; no refund with fewer than 25 days notice, even if due to last-minute illness or injury.